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O, BE NOT THE FIRST!

O! be not the first to discover
A blot on the fame of a friend,
A flaw in the faith of a lover,
Whose heart may prove true to the end.

We none of us know one another,
And oft in error we fall;
Then let us speak well of our brother,
Or speak not about him at all.

A smile or a sigh may awaken
Suspicion most foul and untrue;
And thus our belief may be shaken
In hearts that are honest and true.

How often the light smile of gladness
Is worn by the friends that we meet
To cover a soul full of sadness,
Too proud to acknowledge defeat.

How often the sigh of dejection
Is heaved from the hypocrite's breast,
To parody truth and affection,
Or lull a suspicion to rest.

How often the friends we hold dearest,
Their noblest affections conceal,
And blossom the purest, sincerest,
Have secrets they cannot reveal.

Leave base minds to harbor suspicion,
And small ones to trace our defects—
Let ours be a noble ambition,
For base is the mind that suspects.

We none of us know one another,
And oft into error we fall;
Then let us speak well of our brother,
Or speak not about him at all.

From Harper's Weekly.

Only One Killed.

'One killed and three wound-
ed.'

'That all!' said I. Hardly
worth the cost of a telegram.'

There had been a reconnis-
sance, a surprise of the enemy's
scouts, a brief sharp engage-
ment, ending successfully, and
casualties as above.

A pair of sober gray eyes were
turned upon my face, and I read
in them a silent rebuke for this
lightness of speech.

'And yet,' I added, by way
of apology for my remark, 'the
loss of a single life may shadow
more than a single home. Cups
that held until now only sweet
wine may be full of bitterness
hereafter.'

'What Company was engaged?'
asked a man, who sat near. The
newspaper was referred to, and
the answer given.

'Company C.'
Col. R——'s regiment.

'Yes, Sir.'
'Are the names of the killed
and wounded given?'

I noticed a slight unsteadiness
in the man's voice.

'No names are given?'

'May I see your paper for a
moment?'

I handed him the newspaper,
in which I had read about the re-
connisance, and what seemed,
at the moment a casualty not
worth reporting. I saw that his
hand trembled a little, and that
his eyes searched through the
sentences of the telegram in an
eager way.

Then, with a falling of the
voice, he added, 'I have a son in
that Company.'

Remembering the light speech
into which a want of reflection
had betrayed me, I did not ven-
ture to respond in any way less
the real concern I now felt
might be regarded, if expressed,
as only a pretense. Soon after
the man nodded to the conductor
of the car in which we were rid-
ing; the checkstring was pulled

the car stopped, and he went out.
My eyes followed him as the
car moved on until I saw him
enter a house.

Two days afterward—I had
forgotten the trifling matter of
one killed and three wounded—
in passing this house I saw crape
on the door. My heart leaped
with a painful throb.

'Who is dead in the third house
below?' I asked of the store-
keeper at the corner.

'Mr. B——'s son. He was
killed.'

'In the war?'

'Yes, Sir. News came, three
days ago, that one man had been
killed in a reconnaissance, and
it turned out to be his son Ed-
ward. Ah! Sir; he was a
splendid young man, and it will
go hard with his father and
mother. And hard, too,' he ad-
ded, lowering his voice, 'for one
besides them.'

'Had he a wife?' I inquir-
ed.

'No, Sir; he was not married.'
'Sweet heart!'

'Yes. He was engaged I be-
lieve.'

Only one killed! How differ-
ently the fact impresses me now!
It was no longer an unrealized
newspaper announcement, but a
present, stern reality.

'Has the body arrived?' I
asked.

'Yes; they brought it home to-
day. Mr. B——went for it
himself.'

'Was it much disfigured?'

'No. A ball passed through
the heart, killing him instantly.'

'Had Mr. B——other sons?'

'No, Sir, Edward was his on-
ly boy. It is a great loss, Sir.'

'How does he bear it? Have
you heard?'

'I saw him an hour ago.'

'Well?'

'He was very calm; but, Sir,
he looked ten years older. Mr.
B——is one of those men who
bear things patiently; but he has
deep feeling nevertheless. That
boy was his idol.'

'How is it with the mother?'

The storekeeper shook his
head. 'I asked Mr. B——, but
his eyes filled, and he choked in
trying to answer. I'm almost
afraid it will be too much for her.
She is not very strong.'

'Did they oppose his going to
war?'

'Mr. B——did not. He's an
earnest man, and loves his coun-
try too well to hold back any-
thing while she is in danger.'

Only one killed! How insig-
nificant the fact seemed when
the telegraph made this announ-
cement; but what bitterness had
followed. Only one killed!

On the day following I noticed,
in passing, a large funeral
procession. Of the tens of thou-
sands who had lingered scarcely
a moment over the brief telegram
announcing but one killed and
three wounded had the imagina-
tion of an individual pictured dis-
tinctly a solemn scene like this
as following in natural conse-
quence, or given the faintest real-
ization of the sorrow and suffer-
ing that lay veiled behind?

Fifty killed and two or three

hundred wounded! Ah! now the
pulses beat. Here is something
worth while! How strangely
this familiarity with war ices
over the heart! One, two, three
hundred killed or mangled. It is
awful to contemplate; and yet we
must come down to the single
cases to get at the heart of this
fearful matter. Away from every
battle-field, from every skir-
mishing ground, heart-cords
stretch, in single lines, to as
many hearts and homes as there
are individuals, and death, or
wounding, thrill these sympa-
thetic lines each with its own
wild fear and anguish.

'That is Mr. B——. His son
was killed in a skirmish with the
enemy. He belonged to Com-
pany C.'

'Oh, in that slight affair! I had
forgotten it. There was only
the trifle of one killed, I think.'

'And that was Mr. B——'s
son.'

Mr. B——was leaving the
car in which we were riding. He
was so changed that I had not re-
cognized him as the individual
in whose presence I spoke so
lightly about one killed and
three wounded only a few weeks
before.

'Sad, isn't it?' said the other
growing serious.

'Very sad. I'm told the moth-
er hasn't left her room since the
terrible news was communicated.
He was an only son.'

'That is trouble,' was answer-
ed. 'How little do we think of
what is really involved when we
run our eyes carelessly and often
half impatiently; over the almost
daily announcements of one or
two killed or wounded in scout
and picket skirmishing! It comes
home to us in Mr. B——'s
case.'

A few weeks later.

'Did you see that face at the
window?' asked a friend with
whom I was walking.

I had observed the face—that
of a young woman. It was vis-
ible for only an instant; but in
that instant it had impressed me
strongly, it was so white, so
ghostly, so full of sadness and suf-
fering.

'Yes, I saw it.'

There has been something
more than bodily sickness,' said
the friend.

'Heart sickness. Pain that
defies the leech's skill.'

'It always touches me to see a
face like that,' remarked my
companion. 'Heart blight in
one so young—ah, it is sad, sad!
How quickly the tender leaves
shrink and fade when frost drops
down on a spring blossom! Its
life is drawn from the sunshine,
and falls when the icy winds pass
over. In later years we have
more endurance. The heart is
stronger to bear.'

Not long afterward the same
pale face and sad eyes looked
out upon me from a carriage, and
their image and expression re-
mained with me as in a picture
for many days.

'I am haunted by that face,'
said I, as it glided past me on
the street; the eyes resting in
mine for an instant. Was there

not something of rebuke in them?
I felt it so. And yet they were
to me the eyes of a stranger.

'Unhappy one! sorrow has
touched you early with his blight-
ing fingers.' So I spoke with
myself as I walked on musing.
'Has love failed, or the shadow
of death fallen over the threshold
of one dearer than life? Ah, is
there not in the experience of one
soul, tried in the fire as thou as-
suredly hast been, pain enough
to make our hearts shiver in the
bare imagination? First the
stunning shock of a fearful cal-
amity; then the awakening to
pain as life begins to stir in
the bruised and broken fibres
and organs, in the quivering
nerves and lacerated tissues; then
the almost equally balanced con-
test between life and death; and
the long period of slow recupera-
tion, with its anguish of aching
wounds, its helplessness, its des-
pondency, its darkness. Ah!
what a history is written in a
face like thine, pale, suffering
stranger! How little of all this
is imagined by the passing
crowd!'

Next I saw the face in church.
It was still pale and sad, and
bore a look of exhaustion, as
from long endured pain.—
But now there was in it a softer
expression—a touch of resig-
nation blending with pious hope.

'The strong hath strengthened
her,' so I said in my thought.—
'The burden was too heavy for
her own soul, and she hath laid
it upon Him. Her refuge is
with the Comforter.'

Often during the services my
eyes turned involuntary toward
the young lady, who had awaken-
ed in me an interest little short
of fascination. No more de-
vout worshiper sat under the
preacher's ministrations. She
impressed as one who had turned
hopelessly from earth, and now
rested all with heaven.

As I moved down one of the
aisles after the benediction had
been pronounced, the slightly
bowed form of Mr. B——met
my observation. He was alone.
My thought went instantly to
his wife sorrowing for her dead
son.

'What! I ejaculated, speaking
half aloud, as a conviction flash-
ed across my mind, 'did that
arrow strike there also?'

Mr. B——had paused by the
pew door from which the pale
faced young woman was stepping
into the aisle and taking her hand.
I did not see his face but I noted
a faint, sad smile on her lips.—
They passed out together. In
the vestibule they lingered, and,
in answer to a question, I heard
Mr. B——say.

'I think she is a little more
like herself. Come and see her,
won't you? It will do you both
good.'

Tears sprang to her eyes. My
own were filling.

'I will come.' I saw her lips
quiver, as she thus answered, and
then turned almost hastily away.
'Poor Alice!' said a voice
near me.

'Doesn't it make you sad to